

Fighting 13th



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The 13th MEU(SOC) Newsletter

www.usmc.mil/13thmeu

13th MEU brings humanitarian assistance to Philippines

By Cpl. Andy Hurt
Editor

TAWI-TAWI PROVINCE, Philippines (Aug. 10, 2005) – Marines and Sailors from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and Naval Expeditionary Strike Group One landed in the Philippines to support a humanitarian assistance operation in cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other non-government organizations.

The two-day operation brought the 13th MEU warriors to the small villages of Batu-Batu and Sanga-Sanga on the island of Tawi-Tawi, in the tropical jungle regions of the Panglima Sugala Province, near the Malaysian border.

In Batu-Batu, MEU Service Support Group 13 and ESG-1 doctors and dentists, along with Marines from MSSG-13 and Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, docked landing craft units at a local pier, designated as a naval base, and began off-loading supplies and transporting them to the humanitarian assistance site, a small elementary school.

Villagers lined the dirt roads

along the route, waving to the members of the relief force.

A massive crowd gathered at the school and servicemembers didn't hesitate in setting up field-expedient examination rooms and a pharmacy.

"This is an excellent opportunity to exercise what we were trained to do," said Ensign Fernando Patron, a doctor from Naval Fleet Surgical Team 3. The Los Angeles native pulled nearly 100 teeth in Batu-Batu, but felt the operation benefited a worthy cause.

"This gives us the rare opportunity to help (the Filipino) people out," he said.

During the evolution, patients were evaluated individually by various relief personnel and given proper medical and dental assistance according to their symptoms. Translators worked throughout the day communicating between the villagers and medical personnel, who treated patients for ailments

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Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt
Building a bookcase, Petty Officer 3rd Class Carl Van Schaik lends a hand during the two-day humanitarian assistance effort on the island province of Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. Van Schaik, a Portland, Or., native, has been a hospital corpsman with 1st Platoon, Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, since December 2004.

Inside this issue:

'Father Bob' asks 'Why do we do it?' Find out the answer inside.

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13th MEU (SOC) Marines and Sailors spread mission of goodwill through friendly game of 'Footy.'

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Chaplain asks: 'Why do we do it?' Because.

By Navy Lt. Bob Keener
Chaplain, USS Tarawa

Hello my friends,

As we float along the beautiful sea, rocking back and forth, there are many questions that pop through our mind at times. One of them is 'why do we do this?' This is difficult to answer when we stare at the calendar and watch each day slowly being scratched off, or watch the second hand gently circle the clock. Periods like these give a person plenty of time to think about what is really important in their life. We do not need many items of luxury. Heck, just a soft mattress and pillow would be sufficient. We have many dreams of our future and the direction that God will lead us. But the one thing that inspires a Marine the most is the loved ones that are at home. How an envelope with a letter or a card will brighten up a gloomy day. How looking at a little picture that is carried in a wallet will bring a tear and a smile on ones' face. And how often does one run their hands through the stubbles of hair on their heads and wonder 'why' or 'is it worth it?'

But then when one jumps out of their rack and puts on their uniform and blouses their boots somehow it all falls together. They look at their fellow brothers and sisters of the Corps and realize that love ones and families may be back in the states, there is a different kind of family that walks the steel walls of a new home. There is a special bond that runs through the veins of these individuals and a commitment that has been paved by generations of 'Devil Dogs.'

Their backs are straightened out and there is a certain strut as they go about doing their duty

with the slogans that have been ingrained in their heads, 'Honor and Pride.' It is not an easy life for a Marine and their families. They are united on the front lines and in the homes of the families that pray for them as they lay their heads on their pillows at night.

So then, why do we do this? The answer: 'because.' Because we believe in what we do and what we represent. Because we have pride and honor and respect for all life. Because we want our families to be proud and our little children look up and dream one day that they will walk the same steps. Because we want peace in this world and peace on our own streets. Because we have faith and a belief that God is with us. But especially because we

'To our families at home: You are in our thoughts and in our prayers, and are truly missed.'

know that many have been called and a few have been chosen to be titled a United States Marine.

To our families at home: You are in our thoughts and in our prayers and are truly missed. But always realize that you are loved and never forgotten. These days and months can seem like a life time, but soon we will all be home in the comfort of each other. I found a nice poem that I would like to share because our Marines are God's chosen few.

"The Final Inspection"

The Marine stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining

just as brightly as his brass.

"Step forward now, you Marine,
how shall I deal with you?

Have you always turned the other cheek?
To my Church have you been true?"

The Marine squared his shoulders and said,
"No Lord, I guess I ain't.

Because those of us who carry guns
can't always be a saint.

And at times my talk was tough
and sometimes I've been violent,
because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny
that wasn't mine to keep.

Though I worked a lot of overtime
when the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help
though at times I shook with fear
and sometimes, God, forgive me
I have wept unmanly tears.
I know I don't deserve a place
among the people here
they never wanted me around

except to calm their fears.

If you have a place for me here Lord
It need not be so grand.

I never expected or had too much
But if you don't I'll understand,".

There was a silence all around the throne
where the saints had often trod.

As the Marine waited quietly
for the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now you Marine
you have borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's street
you have done your time in Hell."

Semper Fi,
Father Bob

The Fighting 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)



Commanding Officer:
Col. James K. LaVine

Public Affairs Officer:
Capt. Amy Malugani

Public Affairs Chief:
Staff Sgt. Houston F. White, Jr.

Editor:
Cpl. Andy Hurt

Combat Correspondent:
Sgt. Charles Moore

Combat Camera:
Cpl. Chad Leddy

Combat Camera:
Cpl. James Evans

Combat Camera:
Lance Cpl. Kyle Keathley

Mail inquiries to:
Commanding Officer
13th Marine Expeditionary Unit
ATTN: Public Affairs Office
42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

Personal Mail:
Grade/Name/USMC
13th MEU (Section)
Unit 42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

From the 13th MEU(SOC) Commanding Officer

Family and Friends,

In the past six weeks the Marines and Sailors of the Fighting 13th traveled 11,800 nautical miles, provided humanitarian assistance to more than 5,000 people in the Philippines, successfully completed a training exercise in Darwin, Australia, and enthusiastically participated in a "crossing of the line" ceremony, where MEU Wogs became honored Shellbacks. As you can gather by the events above, our Marines and Sailors have been busy since the Amphibious Ready Group left San Diego in July. As we approach the two-month mark I want to sincerely thank you for continued support, unwavering dedication and willingness to adapt to the unexpected changes and events that come with the military way of life. Many of you have inquired about the daily life on ship. Although the daily interactions with family and the comforts of home are nearly impossible to replace, the MEU staff, MSE commanders and ship's crew do their best to

provide Marines and Sailors the opportunity to grow professionally and personally through a number of scheduled classes and MWR events while we are underway.

Arabic language classes and a variety of college courses are offered to Marines and Sailors daily. Computers are available in the library and berthing areas so everyone has the opportunity to stay connected to family and friends, or simply to keep up with sports and the news. Chaplains and Religious Personnel offer services, classes, bible studies and counseling throughout the week to accommodate all faith groups.

Social events to include movie nights, athletic competitions, birthday dinners and ice cream socials are scheduled throughout the month to break up the daily routine.

The days you spend away from your servicemember may also seem long and at times to run into the next. Although our network connectivity is not quite what it was in Camp Del Mar, our Marines are working

hard to ensure we stay connected. I encourage you to stay connected to your Marine and Sailor through e-mails, letters and updates posted on our Web site. Stories and photographs of our training, missions and events are posted weekly to www.usmc.mil/13thmeu. Additionally, our Key Volunteers have scheduled several social events throughout the upcoming months for family member and friends to gather for fun and encouragement. We may not know what is in store for the Fighting 13th in the months ahead; however, I am confident that whatever comes our way, the Marines and Sailors of this unit will respond with diligence, courage and pride. Months of preparation and training coupled with the unwavering commitment I witness daily will get us through the days to come-- and safely home to family and friends.

Semper Fi,

Col. J.K. LaVine

13th MEU (SOC), Commanding

Hometown Heroes



This month's hometown hero is **Sgt. Frederic J. Lewis** of Bay St. Louis, Miss. Lewis, a squadleader from 1st Platoon, Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, recently earned the title "13th MEU (SOC) Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter." Currently on his third deployment with the battalion since reporting for duty in April 2002, Lewis said he plans to attend Sergeant's Course upon returning home, and ultimately serve as a Drill Instructor.

A message from the Key Volunteer Network

Hello Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU!

We have surpassed the one-month mark since your departure and are counting down the days.

We feel confident that time will pass even more quickly with school starting and families establishing their routines.

We recently hosted our first Key Volunteer Network event, dubbed the "Bright Star Bash" Aug. 28, and what a memorable day it was for all who attended.

It was a perfect sunny day in Southern California. All of you were in our thoughts that day as we talked, laughed and made cards and a banner. You can expect a little something from all of us during an upcoming mail call!

Please encourage your spouse and families to attend our next scheduled KVN event at the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Bowling Alley, located on Mainside across from the Exchange plaza, on Sept. 24. The event is slated to begin at 1 p.m.

Take good care of yourselves and each other. We miss you and are very proud of each and every one of our Marines and Sailors. Over and out!

-From the Command Element Key Volunteer Network

Command Element Family Info/Admin Notes

SGLI Coverage

On Sept. 1, the maximum amount of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) coverage will automatically increase from \$250,000 to \$400,000, even if servicemembers have previously declined the increase or elected less coverage. In addition to the increase, servicemembers can only elect coverage in increments of \$50,000. Previously, members could elect coverage in increments of \$10,000.

The increase raises SGLI premiums from \$16.25/month (\$250k) to \$26/month (\$400k).

If a servicemember still wishes to decline the increased amount, or re-elect lesser coverage, they should contact Gunnery Sgt. Albino Parra, 13th MEU S-1 Chief, at parraa@tarawa.usmc.mil.

Extra Pay?

Due to operational commitments, Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU (SOC) can expect Hostile Fire Pay and Combat Tax Exclusion starting Sept. 15. Marines and Sailors should review their Leave and Earnings Statements (LES) to ensure there are no discrepancies. For more information, contact Gunnery Sgt. Albino Parra, 13th MEU S-1 Chief, at parraa@tarawa.usmc.mil.

Split Pay

The 13th MEU (SOC) Personnel Office reported that the Split Pay system, allowing Marines and Sailors to elect a monetary amount to be deducted from stateside bank accounts and deposited into the "Navy Cash" system, is running smoothly. Any Marines or Sailors facing problems with Split Pay should contact the Personnel Office immediately to

correct the problem. The point of contact for Split Pay information is Gunnery Sgt. Albino Parra, 13th MEU S-1 Chief, at parraa@tarawa.usmc.mil.

Composite Scores

Composite scores were updated for Marines, corporals and below, on Aug. 26. The new scores will apply to the promotion quarter beginning October and ending December. Marines can view their composite scores on Marine On-Line, available at www.mol.usmc.mil.

Upcoming Family Event Hosted by CE KVN

Planning for the second Command Element Key Volunteer Network event for families and friends has begun!

On Sept. 24, at 1 p.m., the KVN is scheduled to host a bowling party at the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Bowling Alley, located on Mainside across from the Main Exchange Plaza.

The event is open to **all** families and friends of the Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU (SOC) Command Element. Events slated are Halloween crafts, pizza, bowling and more!

For more information and directions, contact your Key Volunteer Coordinators at (949) 366-0514 or (760) 798-9074.

Tiger Cruise Info

The USS Tarawa will soon be requesting permission to host a "Tiger Cruise" on our return trip from Pearl Harbor to San Diego. Our "Tigers" will meet the ship in Hawaii near the end of our deployment and accompany us on our return to homeport.

13th MEU Warrior Birthdays - September -

Sgt. William A. Colon - September 7
S-4 Supply Clerk

Sgt. Jed Tuttle - September 7
S-2 Russian Linguist

Lance Cpl. Russel Kallal - September 11
S-2 Collections Operator

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Geil - September 24
S-4 Warehouse Chief

Sgt. Allen Leiper - September 25
S-4 Embarkation Chief

Master Sgt. Craig Dawson - September 29
S-3 Operations Chief

Sgt. Eric Duncan - September 30
S-4 Supply NCO

"Tiger Cruise" is a special guest cruise program where Sailors and Marines are permitted to embark friends and relatives. This program provides the opportunity for our family and friends to see and participate in the daily shipboard routine.

Each Sailor and Marine can invite two Tigers that meet the following criteria.

- Participants must be eight years of age or older.
- Spouses/girlfriends/boyfriends are not allowed to participate.
- All Tigers must be medically qualified.
- Foreign nationals may be invited, but special clearance is required.

The only expense will be the cost of the Tiger's meals while onboard TARAWA.

Look for the "Tiger Sponsor-

ship" form, scheduled to be distributed in October.

13th MEU(SOC) Mailing Addresses

Due to the on going Western Pacific deployment, official and personal mailing addresses have been modified to according to operational conditions.

The official unit mailing address is as follows:

COMMANDING OFFICER
ATTN (SECTION)
13TH MEU
UNIT 42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

The personal mailing address is as follows:

GRADE/NAME/USMC
13TH MEU (SECTION)
UNIT 42525
FPO AP 96610-2525



Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt

Lance Cpl. David C. Seitter, a squad leader from 1st platoon, Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, keeps a watchful eye on a supply line at the Batu-Batu pier in Panglima Sugala, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. Tawi-Tawi, an island province in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), is the southernmost province in the country.

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such as malaria, urinary tract infections and upper respiratory infections.

Nurbert M. Sahali, the mayor of Panglima Sugala, Batu-Batu, said the HAO was a “really big break” for the local citizens.

“Our municipality is mostly fifth-class,” he said. “They can’t afford this kind of help. Hopefully, in the future, you’ll come again.”

After providing care for more than 1,300 patients, the relief effort team regrouped and marched out of town with villagers smiling and waving along the way.

During the second day of the operation, the relief group departed the Tarawa via helicopters from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-163 (reinforced), the Aviation Combat Element of the 13th MEU(SOC).

Landing at a small airstrip, designated as a Philippine air

force base, U.S. forces were once again greeted by Filipino Marines, and transported to Mindanao State University in Sanga-Sanga.

There, much of the same relief was provided, with overwhelming support from a non-government relief organization and security from Filipino Marines.

Citizens of Sanga-Sanga welcomed the effort with smiles, and waved to ESG and MEU forces, saying “Good morning, sir,” to nearly every passing individual.

Students from the university were also on scene, and took the rare opportunity to converse with the Americans, asking questions about culture, music and Hollywood.

In the afternoon, 13th MEU (SOC) commander Col. James K. LaVine was invited to lunch at the Sanga-Sanga Marine Corps Base, where he and his staff were treated to a meal and discussed the 13th MEU’s

capabilities and organizational structure.

By the end of the day, the relief effort provided care for nearly 1,440 patients, including 300 children.

Navy Lt. j.g. Kevin Jane, a Long Beach, Calif., native, and public affairs officer from Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, said based on the turnout alone, the mission was a success.

“(The locals) have all been very responsive, and they have embraced this.”

According to Lt. Jackie Carter, engineering officer and site commander, “This was really one of those things (where) everybody helped

out.”

Carter, a Rifle, Colo., native, said that by integrating Filipino forces, non-government organizations, ESG-1 and 13th MEU(SOC) capabilities, the mission, though exhausting for some, reached its maximum potential for success.

“If we were to do something like this, I would highly recommend working with (local) forces,” she added.

Carter also stressed the satisfaction of the mission despite the long hours and sweat.

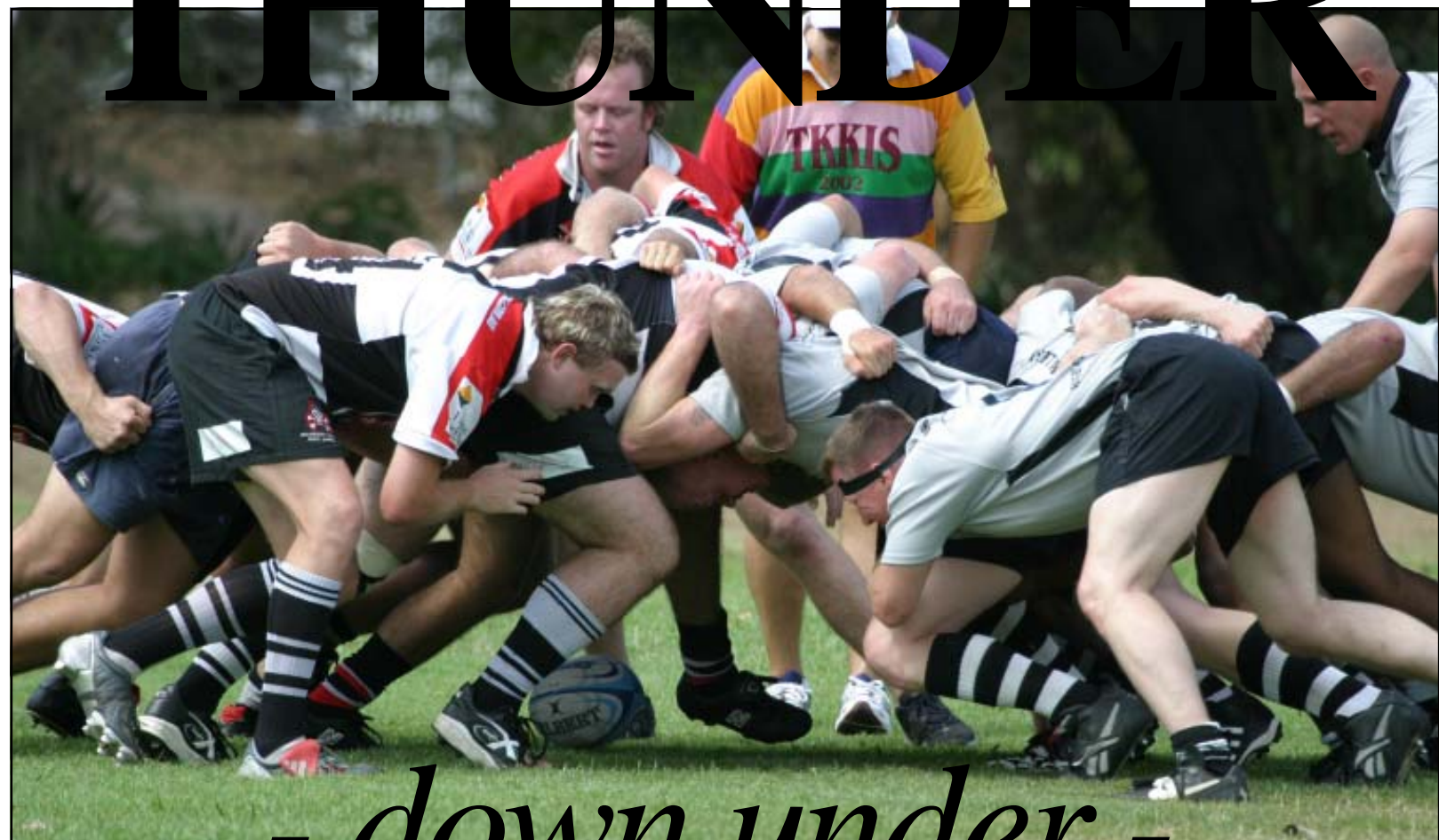
“Even though it was hot and we were tired, it was very rewarding and I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”



Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt

Navy Lt. Dawn Thatcher, an Expeditionary Strike Group One dentist, works on pulling a local boy’s tooth. Although the tooth pulling wouldn’t have been necessary with proper dental equipment, the remote location, poor economy and strain on time made extraction the most effective and efficient manner of preventing further decay.

THUNDER



- down under -

"Scrum." Photo by Gunnery Sgt. James Nutt

By Sgt. Charles Moore

Combat Correspondent

DARWIN, Australia — A group of Marines and Sailors gathered Aug. 20 to take on a team of Australians in a match of rugby, affectionately known 'down under' as "footy."

Servicemembers from 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and Expeditionary Strike Group I, known as the Tarawa Beach Raiders, walked onto the pitch for their first Rugby Union match. The majority of the Tarawa "veterans" had less than two matches experience, one of which was played earlier in the week.

The Beach Raiders played their first match in Darwin against the Royal Australian Air Force Stray Cats. The teams played by "social" rules — a tamed down version of Rugby Union that focused more on socializing than competing to win.

The Beach Raiders were forced to borrow local players to round out their 15-player lineup since many of the members of their team were unavailable because of training commitments, yet still squeezed out a victory.

With a win under their belts, the Raiders took the pitch against the Darwin University Pirates "C" team. The Raiders were hungry for another triumph, as it was time to see how they would "fare against a real team." The Raiders soon found they were in for a real match.

While the Raiders lost in the end, two rookies scored their first try, and several veterans stood out. First Lt. Douglas "Wack Attack" Wacker, assistant communications officer, 13th MEU (SOC), one of the few experienced backfield players, managed to cover most of the positions as he advanced the ball forward and even made several key tackles, causing the coach to yell, "where are all the forwards at?"

Lieutenant Col. Donald "Elvis" Liles, commanding officer, Headquarters Detachment, MEU Service Support Group 13, put his experience to a good use as well in a position that often makes crucial plays.

The team's performance garnered praise from the competition.

"We were impressed with your team's enthusiasm and raw talent and hope that you continue to build the club and keep the love," said Matt "Chairman of the Bored" Grooby, of the University Pirates.

Part of the tradition of the game is for both teams to come together after the match to trade stories and share in merriment.

"You can never forget about the third-half. Rugby is a hooligans' game played by gentlemen. True to that statement, the fight is left on the pitch at the final whistle and both teams come together to share in camaraderie and cheer," Wacker said.

26th MEU returns to Jordan for Infinite Moonlight



Official USMC photo c/o 26th MEU (SOC)

A Marine from Battalion Landing Team 2nd Bn, 8th Marines, runs through a squad rush course while training with Jordanian soldiers during a 10-day bilateral training exercise with the Jordanian army and air force.

By Gunnery Sgt. Mark E. Bradley

26th MEU (SOC) Public
Affairs Chief

ABOARD USS

KEARSARGE (Aug. 25, 2005) — The well decks aboard USS Kearsarge and USS Ashland buzzed with activity Aug. 25 as the last of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) Marines and sailors arrived aboard the ships via landing craft following a 10-day bilateral training exercise with the Jordanian army and air force.

This exercise, dubbed Infinite Moonlight, marked the first time in several years that the U.S. and Jordan have conducted the combined training aimed at reinforcing security in the region while strengthening the military relationships between the United States and Jordan.

Jordanian military officers were quick to make the MEU Marines and Sailors feel welcome as they encouraged a

productive exercise.

"We are very pleased to see you [the Marines]. We are pleased to do any practices and training with you," said Royal Jordanian Brig. Gen. Malek Habashneh, the commanding general of the King Faisal Air Base. "I think this will be very useful to both of us, the Jordanians and Marines. We feel that we are very close to each other in both hospitality and friendship."

Marines from the MEU's ground combat element, Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Bn., 8th Marines, joined with the Jordanian 40th Infantry Brigade to conduct a series of training evolutions including several live-fire events. Meanwhile, many of the jets, helicopters and personnel from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 162 (Reinforced) supported operations and shared aviation experiences with the Jordanian air forces at an air base in central Jordan.

A rocket attack Aug. 19 did

nothing to hamper the exercise. It instead allowed the strike group to demonstrate the United States' resolve in the global war on terrorism and stalwart support of coalition allies. The ships of the Kearsarge Strike Group that appeared to be the targets of the attack simply took up less vulnerable positions a few miles from shore in the Gulf of Aqaba and continued to support the exercise.

Infinite Moonlight is being hailed as a significant Central Command exercise as it demonstrated a partnership and a commitment of U.S. military interoperability with a key ally in the region.

MEU Marines, many of whom have had the opportunity to see several foreign services in action, were impressed by what they saw in Jordan.

"The training here has been really good. We have learned a lot from the Jordanians and they have learned a lot from us," said Cpl. Jason A. Cummings, a team leader with Weapons Platoon, E Company, BLT 2/8.

He noted tactics employed by Royal Jordanian soldiers that were similar to other well-trained military organizations he has observed in the past. It gave him and other Marines in his unit a fresh look at some basic tactics.

"We learned how their squads use different formations during an attack. When doing individual and squad rushes, they do like the (Republic of Korea) Marines by rolling before standing up in order to avoid (taking fire at) their

previous position."

Infinite Moonlight progressed through a series of integrated training exercises with each evolution building toward the next. The exercise concluded with a coordinated bi-lateral field training exercise (FTX) that included close-air support from HMM-162 and a Jordanian and Marine, combined motorized and mechanized armor attack on two separate objectives.

Following the FTX, the BLT 2/8 commander, Lt. Col. Robert G. Petit, commended his troops efforts, comparing them to a professional football team.

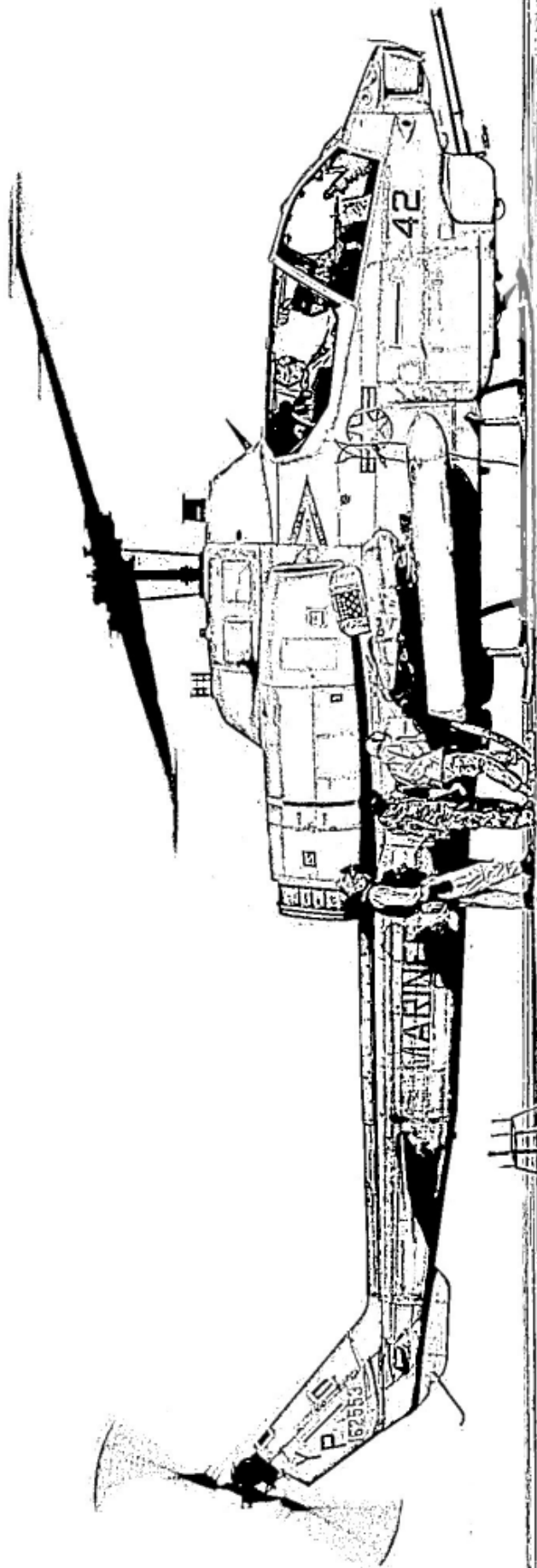
"Every one of you had a piece in the playbook. Everybody had to do their block and everybody had to make their tackle. You have a lot to be proud of. You did a superb job. I hope you remember this place, Jordan," he said.

Other important events during Infinite Moonlight included combined parachute operations, explosive ordnance disposal operations, and AV-8B Harrier / F-5 Freedom Fighter air combat maneuvering qualifications.

With Infinite Moonlight complete, the MEU will complete the backload today and continue its primary mission as the Central Command strategic reserve through the end of the month. The MEU will then re-enter the Mediterranean Sea for operations with Sixth Fleet and to begin preparations for the voyage home.

For more information on the 26th MEU (SOC), log on to www.usmc.mil/26thmeu.

AH-1W SUPER COBRA ATTACK HELICOPTER



Coloring Page!

Kids AND adults: Color this page and write a message to a Marine or Sailor of the Fighting 13th MEU. Mail your page to:

Commanding Officer

ATTN: PAO

13th MEU

Unit 42525

FPO AP 96610-2525

We'll take sent masterpieces and post them aboard the ship! Remember: Have fun and we look forward to your artistic expression!